

'seen enough in Italy to know that we are not setting about the right way in England 'to form a National Gallery.' At a recent sale in Florence 'the finest pictures were sold for a song. Why had not the National Gallery an agent on the spot? What is Lord Burghersh paid for?' and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

*To Isaac D'Israeli.*

FLORENCE,  
Sept. 29, 1826.

There are some clever artists and sculptors at Florence. Among the latter, since the death of Canova, Bertolini is reckoned the most eminent in Italy. He is a man of genius. I had the honor of a very long conversation with him, of course upon his art. He is a friend of Chantrey, but the God of his idolatry, and indeed of all the Italians, is Flaxman. Bertolini said that he considered that Flaxman had revived the taste of Europe, that he was a classic, and that he thought that a young man might study his works with as much advantage as the treasures of the Vatican or the Tribune. He asked me to explain the reason of the indifference of the English to this great man, and expressed his surprise at finding him almost unknown to the great number of our travelling countrymen, and little esteemed even by our great artists. He mentioned Wilkie's opinion of Flaxman with his eyes up to the sky. It seems the English Teniers is no great admirer of one whom Bertolini says is the greatest poet that ever lived, though he never wrote a Terse. The studios of all these men are open to all travellers, and form the most agreeable and instructive lounges. . . .

In one of my speculations I have been disappointed. In the Pitti Palace there is a most beautiful portrait of Charles 1st by Vandyke, the most pleasing and noble likeness that I have ever seen. It is a picture highly esteemed. I engaged a miniature painter here (a class of artists much esteemed at Florence) to make me an exquisite copy of this picture with which I intended to surprise you. After a week's work he has

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli's interest in the Christian Middle Age was never great, and in the letters from Florence there is not a single mention of Dante. Of Michael Angelo, as we may gather from the long tirade in *Vivian Grey* (Bk. V., ch. 2), he was 'no extravagant admirer'; even the great monuments in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo he was not able to look upon 'without disappointment.'